



SUCCESS STORY

Iraqi Children Go Back to School

**‘Operation Backpack’
enables schoolchildren
in Iraq’s Anbar Province
to resume normal routine**



USAID Project Staff

Young Iraqi girls go back to school carrying backpacks full of supplies donated by USAID. Improved security in Iraq has restored confidence among families, enabling them to send children to school.

October 2008—Iraqi children in Anbar Province returned to school this month carrying brand new backpacks filled with supplies provided by the USAID-supported “Operation Backpack.”

Through USAID’s *Iraq Rapid Assistance Program* (IRAP), a set of 15 grants totaling \$3 million were awarded to Local Governments to purchase and distribute backpacks filled with basic supplies such as folders, pens and pencils, calculators, notebooks, markers and crayons. About 200,000 backpacks were distributed throughout Anbar.

Prior to the 1990s, Iraq had one of the best education systems in the Middle East with universal primary school enrollment and high rates of literacy among women. However, due to years of neglect under Saddam Hussein’s regime, school enrollment for all ages declined and schools fell into disrepair.

Determined to improve the conditions for local communities and children, government leaders in each of the 15 cities identified for IRAP grant implementation offered full support to “Operation Backpack.” The Iraqi government officials in Anbar province coordinated with U.S. representatives at Provincial Reconstruction Teams—groups of civilians that work with military units on reconstruction projects—to kick off the October program.

Timothy Moore, USAID representative in Anbar, said: “Vast improvement in the security environment in 2008 has re-established confidence and families are allowing children to attend school on a full-time basis.”

Since 2003, USAID has spent more than \$6 billion on programs designed to stabilize communities; foster economic and agricultural growth; and build the capacity of the national, local, and provincial governments to respond to the needs of Iraqis.

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